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For exchange of information
on nutrition programs
and activities

NUTRITION

PROGRAM NEWS

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State and Local Nutrition Committees

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Nutrition committees and councils at the State and local levels are becoming increasingly important to the coordination of nutrition activities in community health programs. Several State committees that disbanded after World War II are now being considered for reactivation. Nutrition workers in these areas have requested information about the organization, purposes, and activities of existing committees.

We requested this information from the 30 committees with whom we have contact and we appealed to other committees through NUTRITION PROGRAM NEWS (July-August 1967). In this issue of NPN, we are reporting the results of our questioning and our observations as we visit committees from time to time.

STATE AND LOCAL GROUPS

Most of the State and city councils or committees were organized during World War II to implement the work of the War Food Administration. After the war, they geared programs to concern themselves with postwar nutrition problems in the communities they served.

Agencies represented

Most of the committees reported that they invite government and private agencies and professional groups to name one or more representatives. Some invite individuals to be members; a few have both agency representatives and individual members. The following agencies or groups, because of programs with nutritional components, have representatives on nutrition committees:

Public health agencies, school lunch programs, Extension groups, medical schools or centers, utility companies, visiting nurse associations, colleges and universities (home economics, nursing, physical education, health education).

Medical societies, dental societies, industry-sponsored groups, departments of welfare, commissions on aging, heart associations, departments of social services, State departments or bureaus of institutions, Red Cross.

Dietetic associations, home economics associations, library systems, Office of Economic Opportunity, Farmers

In Memoriam:

Marjorie M. Heseltine
C. Frances MacKinnon

The professional community of nutrition workers lost two valued members in a tragic street accident in Washington, D. C. Nov. 24—Marjorie M. Heseltine, former chief, Nutrition Section, Children's Bureau, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and C. Frances MacKinnon, nutrition consultant on Maternal and Child Health, International Programs, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Miss Heseltine was an active and effective member of the Interagency Committee on Nutrition Education from its inception until her retirement.

Miss MacKinnon contributed immeasurably to community nutrition programs both domestic and international in the many posts she had held.

They are sadly missed.

Home Administration, Farm Bureaus, hospital associations, restaurant associations, Institutes of Agriculture.

Poultry improvement associations, school food service associations, State departments of agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, research and development centers, housing administrations, nurses associations, and associations for the blind.

Objectives or purposes

Nutrition committee objectives or purposes are:

1. To improve the nutritional health of people by—
 - a. Bringing together representatives of all agencies or groups concerned with the nutrition of people to consider nutritional needs and to determine problem areas.
 - b. Providing a forum for discussion of issues and a means of exchange of information on current nutrition research, programs, and promising practices.
2. To serve as a coordinating body for all groups interested in nutrition education.

3. To encourage the organization and maintenance of local nutrition programs for the motivation of desirable food practices.
4. To make available nutrition consultant services to groups for the solution of nutrition problems.
5. To sponsor nutrition programs, seminars, forums, and workshops for the benefit of interested professionals and the public.
6. To promote legislation relating to problems of nutrition and public health.

Standing committees

The number of standing committees varies greatly. To give an idea of the scope, we list the standing committees reported to us:

Executive, membership, nominations, legislative, projects, forum planning, research, youth, book reviews, program, publicity, annual meeting, publications, budget, fads and fallacies, audiovisual, and aging.

Officers

Officers of nutrition committees include chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

Not all committees have four officers, however. Many committees do not have a treasurer. Some have combined the offices of secretary and treasurer. Several committees do not have a vice chairman.

Frequency of meetings

Committees or councils meet from once to ten times a year. Several reported meeting once a month except in July and August, and several reported meeting only once a year. Most committees hold a specific number of meetings per year. A few committees meet "as called."

Criteria for membership

Several criteria for membership were listed. Most frequently mentioned were:

1. Interest in sound nutrition information, as shown through application or dissemination in job-related or volunteer activities.
2. Interest in nutrition research and education on a Statewide basis.
3. Agreement to participate in the meetings and work of the nutrition committee.
4. Adequate training or experience.

Prospects may be invited to membership by a majority vote of members present at any regular meeting.

Nutritionists who conduct programs on local levels may be asked to represent both an agency and a geographical area. Agencies interested in nutritional health, welfare, and education are permitted one member.

Activities

Regularly scheduled meetings.—Almost without exception, committees report that the regularly scheduled meetings are planned to help members keep abreast of nutrition research, nutrition education, and nutrition components of member agency programs. Even committees that meet only once a year have a place on the program for newer knowledge of nutrition or for exchange of nutrition information.

Preparation of bibliographies.—Many committees circulate lists of recommended and "not recommended" nutrition books to community groups, particularly libraries. Some committees have prepared annotated bibliographies of nutrition materials for local libraries.

Subcommittees.—Subcommittees are really the action groups of the parent committee. These subcommittees prepare progress reports at least once a year.

Guidance for elementary school teachers.—One committee assumed leadership in the development of a nutrition guide for teachers. Several committees report sponsoring or cosponsoring workshops, institutes, and seminars for elementary school teachers.

Work with low-income families.—Nutrition committees act in an advisory capacity to other professional and subprofessional groups in surveying and working with low-income families. Appropriate materials of member agencies are made available and special materials are developed when needed.

Teenagers' diets.—Several committees have conducted or participated in the conduct of projects designed to upgrade teenage diets. Those that work in an advisory capacity to young people appear most satisfactory.

Speakers' bureau.—A few committees supply speakers who can present appropriate, timely nutrition information to community groups. One committee reports that 12 talks were given in two communities during the year.

Review of nutrition films.—Several groups have appointed subcommittees to review nutrition films. A few have made the information available to workers in member agencies. Others have prepared and circulated on a wider basis a list of recommended films.

Sponsoring of conferences or meetings.—Many committees sponsor or cosponsor conferences or meetings. Some are held to update interested professionals on nutrition research, programs, education, and related activities. Others are designed to focus on particular problem areas. Still others, planned for the general public, are concerned with some persistent problem.

TV or radio programs.—Nutrition committees, either alone or in cooperation with member agencies, plan and conduct nutrition education programs on radio or television. One committee financed the showing of the TV program series, "Food for Life," by Dena Cederquist.

Diet counseling services.—The competencies represented on a nutrition committee or council are precisely what is needed to plan and sponsor diet counseling services for communities. This is especially true if the local medical society is represented on the nutrition committee. Offering these services is not enough, however; there must be an organized effort to encourage people who need such services to use them. At least two committees are now involved in such programs.

Public relations.—One nutrition council is actively working to alert the public and community groups to its availability as a resource agency for sound nutrition information. Another committee works with community agency directors to encourage the use of home economists in community action organizations and similar groups.

Legislation.—One of the legislation subcommittees was concerned with initiating legislation. This subcommittee has compiled a comprehensive paper on problems of the aging as a basis for new legislation. Other subcommittees on legislation inform members of the passage of new legislation and of the implications for nutrition programs.

SPECIAL-PURPOSE COMMITTEES

Many State and local committees are specifically concerned with food stamp participants. Some are actually special-purpose subcommittees of State nutrition groups.

Agencies represented

These groups, which may be made up of representatives from any of the agencies in State nutrition committees, usually have members from the following groups:

Consumer and Marketing Service, USDA, welfare departments, Agricultural Extension Service, health departments, school lunch managers and supervisors, visiting nurse associations.

Dairy Council, public utility home economists, public and private school home economics teachers, the clergy, and food retail trades groups.

Objectives and purposes

The Food Stamp Program makes it possible for low-income families to obtain a desirable assortment of food. By using the amount of money normally spent for food (determined by research) to purchase food stamps, the family receives stamps worth more than the purchase price. The stamps are used in lieu of cash for the purchase of food in local markets. The purposes are:

1. To help needy families acquire more adequate diets.
2. To expand the market for farm products.

Recognizing that simply making additional money available is not assurance that people will use it wisely, nutrition committees concern themselves with the improvement

of health and well-being of low-income families through knowledge and the wise use of available foods.

Organization of committees

Committees generally are organized similarly to the State committees described earlier. Many of these groups are local or county committees, which can conveniently meet about once a month.

Activities

State food stamp committees.—The New Mexico committee reports the following State activities:

1. Acts in an advisory capacity to local groups interested in nutrition education. Activities are suggested to provide reliable information on such subjects as menu planning, food purchasing, and food preparation.
2. Sponsors a workshop for local leaders to suggest and demonstrate the use of low-cost foods.
3. Reviews plans of local groups to help them obtain appropriate nutrition education materials, locate resource people, and study programs in other areas that might be adapted for local use.
4. Furnishes members of the State committee to serve as resource persons to local groups when needed.
5. Distributes appropriate nutrition materials to local groups as they become available.

County or local nutrition committees.—Activities reported by local food stamp committees follow:

1. Preparation of leaflets on the use of current good "food buys" for distribution in homes of food stamp participants by visiting nurses, welfare workers, and others, and by the food stamp office.
2. TV and radio presentations prepared to disseminate nutrition information.
3. Posters and exhibits on low-cost food combinations and recipes displayed in appropriate places—supermarkets, shopping centers, housing projects.
4. Demonstrations on meal planning, food purchasing, storage, and preparation.
5. Group meetings on meal planning and food purchasing, held whenever they can be arranged.
6. Training sessions for local leaders among the food stamp participants. In many localities, interested homemakers among the food stamp participants were given a series of lessons. The homemakers then presented each lesson to their neighbors. The homemakers were well received when a professional worker would not have been accepted.
7. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the education program. Some local committees conducted interviews in homes on a sample basis; others have sent questionnaires to the homes.

Coordination of activities

Coordination is usually at the local or county level. However, a State committee responsible for Statewide coordination is highly desirable because it provides for greater exchange of information, ideas, and approaches.

Assistance to special-purpose committees

Activities reported above are engaged in by nutrition committees as a group. Member agencies, as a part of their regular programs, also contribute substantially to the fulfillment of committee purposes.

The efforts of nutrition workers in public health, Extension, and school lunch programs is consistent, ongoing, and considerable.

Activities of other member agencies may vary and not be as well known.

For example, at the University of Southern Mississippi, undergraduate home economics students are given experience in working with needy families every quarter.

The University cooperates with the Public Welfare Agency in Forrest County. Students give demonstration classes for food stamp participants. In the fall and winter of 1966-67, students taught on nine dates; they repeated the lesson once after a 30 minute break. Suggestions for using food wisely were also given.

Students pointed out how homemakers could save money by preparing food at home and by using nonfat dry milk instead of fluid whole milk. Take-home material was given to each person attending the demonstration and posters showing savings were used to tell the story. In each demonstration, the nutritional value of food was emphasized.

For the past 11 years, students at the University of Southern Mississippi have taken part in ante-partum conferences in the auditorium-kitchen area of the Forrest County Health Department. Menus suitable for a pregnant woman and her family were planned for a day. The students prepared the main meal as a demonstration.

During the spring quarter of 1966, in cooperation with Forrest-Stone Area Opportunities, Inc., eight classes were held for the parents of Head Start children. Four lessons were taught at two centers with two girls presenting the material at each center. Other students visited the centers and participated in the teaching program.

The classes were designed to teach adults how to provide good meals for the family at a minimal cost. Lessons were given—

1. To emphasize and demonstrate the use of food guides.
2. To help translate food guides into meals and snacks.

3. To encourage the use of economical but nourishing foods.
4. To point out the importance of sanitation and safety procedures with foods and their contribution to economy and good nutrition.

IN CONCLUSION

When one views the composite of nutrition committees and councils, the great potential of these groups as a strong leadership force becomes readily apparent.

As an advisory body, these groups represent a comprehensive resource of expertise. Nutritionists and workers in allied professions, representing virtually every community program with a nutrition component, are included. This impressive array of competencies could be applied to the solution of complex community nutrition problems.

For example, the State nutrition committee might well be consulted on the content of nutrition training for program aides who work in community agencies. The result would be that program aides working in Extension, public health, or voluntary agencies would carry the same basic information to a specific group in the population—food stamp participants, for example. This would prevent confusion among the people and would also reinforce the individual programs.

If the community problem appears to be specific to the authorities of one or more member agencies, prompt referrals could be made and possibly joint action taken.

The scope of activities reported by the various committees reveals a real potential *as a clearing house* for information and activities. The exchange of information among members on objectives, problems, and procedures of all agency programs not only increases understanding of programs but promotes coordination. Duplication of services can be prevented or minimized and gaps in nutrition emphasis can lead to program revision or redirection.

A few nutrition committees report activities that reveal the potential of these groups as *initiators*. For example, it is desirable that members of nutrition committees be aware of and understand new legislation and influence others to vote for desirable legislation. These groups, with their nutrition expertise, can take steps to have needed nutrition legislation introduced into State legislatures.

Gaps found in nutrition emphasis in community programs can be a basis for appropriate new projects for the nutrition committee to undertake. Findings may be used to demonstrate the need for projects that might be undertaken by PTAs, service clubs, and other local groups.